

PERSPECTIVE

BY ROBERT CASTLE

Guelph Provost's report places ball in student councils' court

The long-awaited interim report of Provost Gilmor has finally been completed. His examination of student government at York has been greatly toned down from his discussion paper of the early fall. At that time, Gilmor recommended major alterations to the structure of student government. Faculties were to

displace the colleges as the focal point of student involvement in the university.

The latest document seems to be an attempt to build a consensus among student leaders regarding the structure of our various levels of government. What is required now is strong and visionary leadership at York to recognize an opportunity to create a system of government which reflects existing interests and will be responsive to the future needs of students.

In the fall, college leaders were understandably concerned with the implications of the Gilmor Report. Their traditional funding levels were threatened as was their political presence in the central decision-making process. The colleges should look very closely at the new report to see exactly what it means to them. First, they no longer stand to lose their prominent position in the student affairs of York. Gilmor now recognizes that our colleges serve a purpose and should be allowed to continue to serve their constituencies.

Secondly, the colleges no longer lose their influence at the centre. Rather, their presence will be much stronger. Gilmor recommends that the Council of the York Student Federation (CYSF) become the one unified voice for all undergraduates. Under the present order, this would mean enhancing the centre at the expense of the localities. However, a new regime would establish a board of directors of CYSF, composed of the small executive committee (President, Vice-President Colleges, and Vice-President Faculties), and the presidents of all recognized student governments at York, both faculty and college.

With this new structure the most informed individuals in the local governments—the presidents—would be directing the policies of CYSF; the issues of concern to the colleges and faculties would thus become the issues of concern of the central government. The undergrads at York would finally be served by a true federation that recognizes the diverse interests and needs of our students and their representatives.

The colleges should see this as a step forward as the federation they established almost 20 years ago will function as it always should have—as the representative for issues of central concern to all students. The faculties should also see the progressive approach of the document. They would be recognized as legitimate governments, capable of ensuring

that the concerns and interests of their constituencies are addressed by the central authority.

For too long there has been confusion over the role that CYSF should play versus the role of the local governments. Gilmor recommends as a possible solution that the responsibilities of the levels of government be clearly separated to make certain the federal nature of York is recognized.

Of course, the document is far from perfect. It is flawed, in part, because it still remains an interim report, but also because some of its recommendations simply don't make sense. A major problem concerns the funding arrangements between the various governments, primarily over the issue of the funding distribution between the colleges and the faculties. Gilmor suggests that students should be given a choice between their faculty and their college, or they should be allowed to split their affiliation between both.

Many student government leaders have argued, with some forcefulness, that such a set-up would make long term financial planning very difficult. It is more logical to establish a formulaic distribution between the colleges and the faculties. Budgetary planners would then be able to project over long periods of time the financial position of their organization, allowing for long term policy decisions.

This point leads comfortably into a major area of strategic concern. Gilmor does not contend to provide all the answers to the problems of York student government. What is necessary now is a concerted effort on the part of student leaders to take this document and build upon it a consensus on a number of issues.

CYSF should take the initiative of consensus building. If it is to become a larger, more representative body for the undergrads, now is the time to demonstrate leadership, now is the time to bring together the leaders of all the affected groups, to meet in a sort of constitutional conference.

Together they should draft a response to Gilmor's report which would demonstrate the ability of the diverse elements of the university to put aside petty political issues and to recognize the need to work constructively toward a common goal—serving the interests of York students.

□ Rob Castle, a first year Osgoode student, and executive assistant of the Student Centre initiative, was last year's Academic Affairs Director for CYSF.

Letters Cont'd

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as being people who are intolerant of other points of view. When the Jehovah's Witnesses come knocking on your door, do you call the police?

I thought that in Canada we enjoyed the privilege of freedom of religion and expression. For some Christians, converting others is a religious duty. What is wrong with letting others speak their beliefs?

I understand that Jews for Jesus use deceitful methods, and it is not their actual beliefs I support. But when I read that Levy was sponsored by the "Anti-Missionary Committee," I was under the impression that at stake was an issue that goes beyond the Jews for Jesus. What is at issue, in part, is oppression of religious expression. Now this is something which could be debated forever, and it is impossible, I suspect, to come up with an absolute "right" or "wrong" concerning this issue. Nevertheless, I feel that oppression of an aspect of religion which merely involves communication is a method akin to totalitarian ways of doing things. In my anger, I felt that those who were afraid of words were "wimps" (something I attribute to all totalitarians).

If the ideology of Jews for Jesus is irrational, even insulting, I would like to decide that for myself, by examining *myself* what they say. In actual fact, I think it is good that Levy's group presents others with their point of view on the Jews for Jesus. But if they are going to try to "win back Jews," perhaps some of his supporters should stop complaining about missionary work.

In conclusion, I would like to make certain things clear: I do not support Jews for Jesus or any other religious groups. I understand that Jews for Jesus were kicked off campus last year for breaking university regulations, and I have no qualms with the enforcement of the law.

I know many people will continue to disagree with my beliefs and will call me a fool for having them. But I hope that they can at least under-

stand that my beliefs come from some form of reasoning. Perhaps if some people again write on this issue, they will do the same—although unfortunately I suspect the most we could do is agree to disagree. Nevertheless, I remain open to all valid arguments.

—Daniel Silver
Toronto

York associations divide community reader charges

Editor:

I am interested in finding out whether or not students are overwhelmed with the type of extra-curricular "Associations" found at York University. I for one am not satisfied.

All I see around York is the various "Associations" segregating students. I do not see these "Associations" interacting with each other athletically, socially, philanthropically, or academically. For the most part I see these various "Associations" segregating people by religion and ethnic group.

Now don't get me wrong; there is nothing wrong with religious or ethnic "Associations" on campus. However, I do not think that they should make up the majority of extra-curricular student activities. Many are quick to reply to this attitude with, "that's what the college system is for, silly." Oh! By the way, I'm also interested in finding out what students think of York's College system (The College system and not any specific college in particular.)

—G. Bader

Centre will offer needed club space

Editor:

Recently, there has been much talk in the University press about the

need for more student space at York. From personal experience I have found this to be true. This past fall I helped form the Psychology Students' Association. With over 150 members, we are already one of the largest academic clubs on campus. But when we attempted to get club space, we found a tremendous shortage. To date, we have yet to find even a desk to work from.

Our Association functions in a piecemeal fashion as our executive is forced to meet in pubs and hallways around campus. Talking with other club leaders it is apparent that this situation is not unique to us. York has little to offer in the way of useful or functional office space for the clubs which service its students.

We have almost 100 clubs at York with less than a quarter of those having space, usually in an overcrowded office or portable. In fact, the portables are only a temporary answer to a more serious problem.

It's time for all York students to realise that not only the organised clubs suffer, but so does the individual.

What we need to do is fully and actively support the current student centre campaign. At a small cost, this will ensure that there will always be space for all our needs as students.

—Marion Stehouwer
Chairperson
Psychology Students' Association

Students invoke Fifth Amendment in North affair

Editor:

We felt that the York community should be aware that the York University political science department offers a course in Latin American Culture and Politics by a Professor North. We could tell you more, but we do not wish to testify on the grounds that we may incriminate ourselves.

—Steve Manweiler, Paul Brannigan
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